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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7507  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0955  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2552  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5311  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 9364

S E C R E T RIYADH 000141

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [LE](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH TO LEBANESE FM: SAG MIGHT BOYCOTT  
MARCH ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT

REF: A. A) RIYADH 118

[B](#). B) CAIRO 158

[C](#). C) BEIRUT 140

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael Gfoeller  
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) SUMMARY: According to the Lebanese DCM Ziad Itani, King Abdullah supports the current Lebanese government and its push for immediate presidential elections. The King reportedly told PM Siniora during his January 25 visit that if the Syrian government prevents Lebanese elections, neither the SAG nor the Government of Egypt would attend the March Arab League summit scheduled for Damascus. Itani added that the SAG might even consider economic sanctions against Syria if causes further delays in the Lebanese election. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (S) Lebanese Deputy Chief of Mission briefed PolOff on PM Siniora's January 25 visit to Riyadh. Siniora and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal discussed the assassination of Lebanese intelligence officer Captain Wassim Eid, the Lebanese election process and the then upcoming Arab League Exceptional Ministerial Meeting.

[3](#). (S) Siniora met King Abdullah for nearly three hours. King Abdullah was accompanied by FM Prince Saud al-Faisal, General Intelligence Chief Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, Riyadh Governor Prince Salman, and the Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulaziz Khujah. Siniora asked King Abdullah for support in conducting the presidential elections immediately without outside interference. Siniora also asked the King to put additional pressure on Syria. King Abdullah responded affirmatively to both requests and added that the January 27 Arab League Exceptional Ministerial meeting aimed to support the pre-set February 11 deadline for elections (Ref A). Further, if the deadline was not met, the SAG, Government of Egypt and perhaps other Arab League countries, would increase pressure on Syria by boycotting the upcoming March Arab League Summit in Damascus.

[4](#). (S) The Arab League Exceptional Ministerial took place on January 27 in Cairo. According to Itani, the communiqu was drafted by the Saudi, Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian and Qatari foreign ministers. Despite Syrian efforts to keep the communiqu as general as possible, it contained for the first time the specific goal of electing General Sleiman Lebanese president on February 11. The communiqu did not allocate cabinet positions as this remains contentious. (NOTE: The Government of Egypt confirmed these comments (Ref B). END NOTE).

[5](#). (S) According to Itani, his government was particularly pleased with the communiqu's February 11 election deadline

and "warning" to Lebanese parties against escalating tensions, which would delay the election and provoke an Arab League reaction. Itani said that during bilateral discussions in Cairo, the Saudis indicated that they might impose economic sanctions on Syria if Lebanese elections were not held shortly. (NOTE: According to SAG MFA officials, relations between Saudi Arabia and Syria are tense at this time. The Saudis currently apply pressure on Syria through the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League. END NOTE).

¶6. (S) COMMENT: While they still prefer to work through multilateral organizations, under King Abdullah the Saudis are playing an increasingly active role in numerous regional issues. We believe the threat to boycott an Arab Summit is credible. We consider actual economic sanctions against Syria less likely at this time, but not out of the question. END COMMENT.  
GFOELLER